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THE UTILITARIAN CHARACTER OF DYNAMIC SOCIOLOGY.*

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Among the many erroneous ideas that prevail in the minds of those who are only partially acquainted with the work which has made the expression Dynamic Sociology somewhat familiar, perhaps the most common one is that it is a scheme of speculative philosophy, and, like all such schemes, far removed from the world of life and action.

It shall be one of the leading purposes of the present paper to dispel, so far as possible, this impression and to point out the practical character of dynamic sociology. That science, while it recognizes too clearly the great permanence of social institutions as products of a slow evolution to promise any immediate radical reforms, nevertheless claims to embody the fundamental elements of ameliorative social processes which, when they shall have had time to develop, will be more sweeping and beneficent than anything promised by the most elaborate scheme of social reform.

Philosophy has passed through many stages since men began to think. Besides the theological, metaphysical, and positive stages so accurately described by Auguste Comte, it has also passed, or is now passing, from the speculative to the utilitarian stage. By speculative is not here meant solely the abstruse dialectics of the schoolmen and the idle imaginings of the early cosmologists. The term may be properly applied to all attempts to look into the operations

* Part of a paper entitled : Sociology in its Relations to Modern Socialistic Tendencies, read before the Anthropological Society of Washington, December 15, 1891.

of nature, mind, man, or society, by which alone a knowledge of the universe has been acquired. I venture to use it in this sense here and without stigma, and to draw the broad distinction between the speculative and the utilitarian methods—between activities devoid of moral purpose and those that aim to make something better.

All three of Comte's stages are more or less speculative, but philosophy is now undergoing another revolution and human thought is concentrating itself upon the practical. Men once thought for the mere pleasure of exercising the brain; philosophy was a form of amusement. They now think for a high moral purpose; philosophy has become a serious occupation. Throughout all past history the developing faculties have loved to probe the secrets of nature and discover all the facts, laws, and wide truths of the universe. But in all this the notion that the world was to be made any better thereby rarely entered the human mind. Vast realms of nature were explored; the properties and relations of all forms of matter were discovered; the laws of physical phenomena were searched out; the organic world was studied and made known; human history and social customs were recorded and minutely described; even the laws of trade—the production, distribution, and consumption of wealth—were closely inquired into. But all this was regarded from the purely objective standpoint. The students of man had no more thought of modifying the operations of society than the students of astronomy had of altering the movements of the stars. Philosophy, in so far as it was distinct from science, pursued the same method, and treated human life and social systems simply as so much fact to be contemplated and learned. The world was the passive object of study, and it was assumed that when its true character was understood the work of the philosopher was done. Just as for ages literature was pursued as a mental gymnastic and for the pleasure which the invention of refined and usually obscure forms of diction afforded to the writer, so the pursuit of knowledge and the search for truth, which constitute science and philosophy, have been thus far chiefly conducted solely for the intellectual pleasure they yield.

There is no higher enjoyment than that experienced in the acquisition of knowledge. Compared to it the effort to persuade is painful. To receive the truth, whether from others, or especially from nature by an effort in searching it out, is an intense satisfaction; to impart it, whether in the capacity of an authorized

teacher, or especially in that of an advocate, is always irksome and usually thankless and discouraging. Why, then, should any one ever undertake the latter? Only because impelled, whether wisely or unwisely, by a sense of duty, which in many minds overrides all considerations of advantage. If I were to venture a personal remark it would be to say that these reflections are the outcome of my own experience. The little corner of the world which I have chosen as a field of exploration yields me all the intellectual enjoyment I could wish, and, humble as it is, it still contains inexhaustible treasures of undiscovered truth. Only enough is known of the present vegetation of the globe to sharpen the appetite for further knowledge, while the whole surface of the earth is strewn with materials for this pleasing study. Still more inspiring is it to turn the lithographic pages of Nature's great book and read in the remains of extinct ancestral forms a history which it required eons to write and which closes where human history begins. The pursuit of such a science begets a feeling too deep to be called pleasure, and yet so elevating in its nature that in the presence of its revelations all human enterprises and social activities seem trivial and jejune; and I often ask myself why, in the midst of such a luxury of intellectual life, provided with occupation which yields the highest form of enjoyment, I should turn aside, even for an hour, to take up an almost hopeless task, involving the hardest labor and promising the scantiest returns.

From this point of view it is easy to understand why there are so few who have any concern for the social state, and why even the wisest of men are so willing to leave the future progress of civilization to the great laws of evolution which have brought it forward to where it is. The reason is equally clear why even those who confine their investigations to man and society are content to study these as the botanist studies the plant, for the satisfaction of knowing their history, their nature, and the laws by which they have been developed. There is a certain peace and restful calm in such investigations. No argument is needed; no one's interests are involved; no prejudices are encountered; no acrimony is aroused. On a former occasion* I characterized this as the "natural-history

*Remarks before the American Economic Association at Washington, D. C., December 29, 1890. Report of the Proceedings of the Am. Econ. Assoc.; Publications, vol. VI, p. 102.

method" in political economy. It belongs to the speculative, contemplative, or purely objective stage of philosophy, which looks upon the universe as something to be made known, but as wholly beyond the power of man to alter or amend.

This habit of thought, preëminently useful in the pioneer ages of the world, has so deeply stamped itself into the texture of the human mind that now, when the time is ripe for grafting upon it a new and higher method, it is found exceedingly difficult to overcome the inertia of ages and introduce a truly utilitarian philosophy. Not that the existence of evil and wrong in the world has not always been recognized, or that it has not been known to many that these are largely due to a defective social organization; for almost the only protests against the speculative indifference of philosophy and science have taken the shape of schemes of social reform involving a more or less radical revolution in the nature of that organization. Each age has had its Fouriers, St. Simons, and Robert Owens, who would tear down the present social structure and build anew from the foundations, blind alike to the laws of evolution, under which society received its present structure, and to the tremendous solidity of all structures which are products of those laws. It is this divorce of science from reform, of the student from the victim of social wrong, that threatens society. It is the indifference of those who should know the remedy, the widening chasm between the doctors and doctrinaires on the one hand, and the drift of unorganized public opinion on the other; and to-day, when the yoke of an outgrown social system weighs heavier than ever and the spirit of revolt is almost ripe, philosophy and science stand back on the old platform of *laissez faire* and leave the field to an army of social reconstructionists with their conflicting and bewildering panaceas.

Few, indeed, have been the attempts to bring a recognition of law and sound scientific principles to bear upon this problem. "Dynamic Sociology," issued in 1883, was at least intended to be such an attempt, and one of the strongest proofs that it sustains this claim is found in the fact that it is objectionable to a certain class because it does not present any schemes of social reform. But this was not its purpose. Such schemes are, for the most part, worthless, and no man is capable of elaborating one which will succeed until much more is known of the fundamental laws of social action. A widespread popular acquaintance with the principles of sociology is the essential prerequisite to successful reform measures.

The collective mind is greater than the individual mind. Civilization illustrates this, whether we take the great systems of industrial art—machines, factories, railroads, and the rest—or the progress of scientific discovery, or the flights reached in music, painting, sculpture, and architecture, or the chief literary productions of the race—in whatever direction we may look the fact is patent that the achievements of all men vastly exceed the possible achievements of any one man. So it must be with schemes of social reform. When the bright thoughts of all bright minds shall be crystallized into some vast social system that has survived the keen analysis of whole nations of well-informed and earnest men, there will probably come forth something substantial enough to begin with and plastic enough to admit of the future modifications which experience may prove to be necessary.

But it is none the less the essence of dynamic sociology to insist upon the necessity of action. It differs fundamentally in this from the philosophies above described. They teach the doctrine of inaction. They are satisfied with the world as it is. They are indifferent to the existing condition of things. They regard all evil as necessary. They treat only the natural history of man; and latterly, since this method has been called in question, the philosophers of the speculative school have assumed the attitude of denying, more or less absolutely, the possibility of modifying the action of what they call natural laws to the advantage of society. It is just here that dynamic sociology takes issue, and it confidently claims that its position is, in the fullest sense of the term, scientific.

While thus firmly maintaining the legitimacy and efficacy of social action, dynamic sociology, as already remarked, is sparing in its recommendations as to the proper direction of such action. The infancy of the whole science of sociology would naturally dictate this; but beyond that consideration it is really no essential part of the science proper to formulate a social polity. That belongs to the art which consists in applying the principles of the science and which may be called dynamic politics.

It belongs, however, to the science to teach that social progress must depend upon the intelligence of the individual units of which society is composed. It further teaches that the result will be proportioned, first, to the degree of intelligence; and, secondly, to the extent of its diffusion. The quality of intelligence is also an important factor. The maximum of success, therefore, in the ameliora-

tion of the social condition will be attained by the widest diffusion of the largest amount of the most important knowledge. Such is, in very brief terms, the argument for universal education, fully carried out, in the second volume of *Dynamic Sociology*.

The Russian government has done me the honor and itself the dishonor to condemn to the flames the Russian edition of that work. The motives that actuated the council of ministers in ordering this to be done have thus far proved inscrutable even to intelligent citizens of that empire. As there is nothing in the work which reflects upon the people of Russia or their rulers, it is to be supposed that it was condemned for the liberalizing doctrines taught by it, and it has been surmised that prominent among these may have been that of universal education. However this may be, nothing is more certain than that the proper cure for Russia's woes is a general system of public instruction, and the Czar who shall inaugurate this reform and place it on a firm and permanent basis will confer upon Russia a far greater boon than the emancipation of the serfs has proved to be.

The utilitarian philosophy has been a product of the growth of moral ideas, and is due to the heightening of the sympathetic nature of man until the contemplation by a morally refined organization of the pains of others becomes itself a pain too acute to be endured. It thus has the same ego-altruistic basis as all benevolent and philanthropic actions, and differs from them only in its methods of relief. This difference of method consists in calling in the rational powers to devise some fundamental and systematic treatment of the evils of society instead of allowing the sympathies to control action directly toward the mitigation of individual cases. Instead of being merely therapeutic, as are all schemes of charity, it is prophylactic, and aims to remove the causes of the pathologic social state. Though arising from the warmest emotional sources, it proceeds by the coolest intellectual processes. It looks upon much of the prevailing charity as useless and even injurious, in tending to produce more suffering than it alleviates, because conducted in ignorance of the laws of human nature. While it would not abolish existing charitable institutions, but would reform them in harmony with those laws, it regards them as the temporary scaffolding of an ultimate social structure which will wholly obviate their necessity.

If it be said that these claims are as extravagant as those of other social reformers it will be admitted that the ends are not different, and that the latter often claim even less than most utilitarian

philosophers concede to be attainable. The difference is in the methods, which in the one case consist in resisting the great current of natural development, while in the other case they utilize that current and make it do most of the work required to be done.

To this general group or system of ideas, constituting the modern utilitarian philosophy, it has been proposed to give the name *meliorism*. The science which underlies this doctrine and which can alone render it a successful principle of action is dynamic sociology. In my general work on the subject I have sought to lay the foundations of this science and nothing more. Current questions are rarely touched upon, but they were never out of my mind while writing it, and there is not one which does not find its proper niche in the system. So much space was necessarily devoted to fundamental considerations, especially to the difficult but unavoidable task of showing how dynamic sociology is based on statical sociology, biology, and the less complex sciences, as indicated in the full title, that to have pointed out the application of each principle to the living issues that naturally grow out of it would have unduly expanded the work. Moreover, there were then excellent reasons for not attempting this, and I preferred to leave each reader to make such application for himself. But now the case is somewhat different. The great movement in public sentiment which I then foresaw has set in strongly, but like all such movements in their inchoate stages it is as yet little more than an expression of general discontent. It is crude, ill-digested, and sporadic, making unreasonable and often impossible demands which are calculated to repel the sober judgment of the conservative element and ultimately to bring about a reaction.

Under such circumstances it would seem to be the duty of all who recognize the laws that have operated to produce the movement to do what can be done to check its wayward tendencies and, as far as possible, to keep it within the normal channels of safe and healthy development. If this is not done those who are likely to suffer by its ravages are certain to resist its whole current until, no longer capable of restraint, it will burst forth in open revolution. What must be will be, but everything depends upon the manner of its being. The problem of to-day is how to help on a certain evolution by averting an otherwise equally certain revolution.

DR. JOHN GILMARY SHEA, the historian, whose death at his home in Elizabeth, New Jersey, was announced February 22, was born in New York city, July 22, 1824. His long life was a busy and profitable one, and there are few to whom American scholars owe a greater debt of gratitude than to him. Having prepared for college at the age of thirteen, he entered the office of a Spanish merchant and there learned to speak and write Spanish with fluency, an accomplishment of immense value to him in his later work. He began to write for publication at a very early age, and his reputation as a historian was assured with the publication of his first book, "The Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley," which appeared in 1853, when he was but twenty-nine years of age. Among his more important historical works are: "The History of the Catholic Missions" (1854), which went through a number of editions; "Early Voyages Up and Down the Mississippi" (1862), and "An Account of the New Netherlands" (1862). His translations of the six volumes of Charlevoix's "History and Description of New France" appeared between the years 1866 and 1872, and that of Hennepin's "Description of Louisiana" in 1880. Perhaps his most important service to anthropology was the editing and publishing of a series of grammars and dictionaries of Indian languages under the title "Library of American Linguistics." He also edited the Cramoisy series of narratives and documents relating to the early history of the French-American colonies, and to Dr. Shea's pen is also due the articles on Indian tribes in Appleton's Encyclopædia. Few individuals and few societies even have done so much to save from oblivion the languages of the North American Indians as Dr. Shea.

Only a few months ago he resigned the editorship of the United States Historical Society in order to devote more time to the important work, "History of the Catholic Church of the United States." Three of the five volumes have already been published, the fourth is in press, while the material for the fifth is almost ready for the printer's hands.

Dr. Shea was of a cheerful, genial disposition, ever ready to oblige a friend or stranger who called on him for information, and possessed a wealth of anecdotes that made him excellent company. He married, in 1854, Miss Savage, who, like the doctor, comes from an old New England family. Two daughters survive this union.